

In the claims:

Amend claims 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 12, 14 and 16 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A releasable retarder for resisting movement of railway cars moving along first and second running rails of a section of railway track, said releasable retarder comprising:

first and second shoe beams supported adjacent to said running rails;

a plurality of pairs of shoes carried by said shoe beams in a parallel, spaced relation with the first and second running rails;

a bias structure biasing the shoe beams toward the running rails, trapping wheels of a railway car entering the retarder between the running rails and the shoes carried by the shoe beams and applying a frictional force to the railway car wheels for slowing or stopping the railway car; and

an a bidirectional operating mechanism operable in a release mode for moving the shoe beams ~~between~~ inwardly, away from the running rails, from a home position in which the shoes are positioned to engage the railway car wheels, and to a release position in which the ~~bias~~ frictional force is released, allowing the railway car to move freely through the retarder, the operating mechanism operable in a service mode for moving the shoe beams outwardly, towards the running rails, from the home position to a service position, allowing insertion of at least one shimming element, whereby upon subsequent movement of the shoe beams by the operating mechanism toward the home position, the shimming element limits travel of the shoe beams such that the shoes are repositioned in an adjusted position

outwardly of the home position, closer to the running rails, compensating for wear on the shoes.

2. (Currently Amended) The releasable retarder of claim 1, wherein the ~~said~~ operating mechanism includes at least one drive mechanism and a common operating member which couples the drive mechanism to the bias structure as the operating mechanism moves the shoe beams from the home position towards the service position.

3. (Currently Amended) The releasable retarder of claim 2, wherein the drive mechanism includes a plurality of bidirectional rams coupled to said common operating member.

4. (Currently Amended) The releasable retarder of claim 3, wherein ~~the rams are bidirectional devices, allowing the retarder to function in a service mode in which~~ movement of the shoe beams by the operating mechanism moves the shoe beams outwardly, relative to the running rails from the home position toward the service position, causes a gap to be provided between the bias structure and a support structure, allowing the insertion of ~~shims~~ said shimming element into the gap between the ~~bias~~ bias structure and [[a]] the support structure for limiting travel of the shoe beams from the service position toward the home position.

5. (Original) The releasable retarder of claim 2, wherein the bias structure includes a plurality of spring packs each including at least one spring.

6. (Currently Amended) The releasable retarder of claim 5, wherein the drive mechanism ~~couples the rams to the spring packs~~ causes the springs to be compressed, as drawing the shoe beams are moved inwardly away from the running rails to the release position.

7. (Currently Amended) The releasable retarder of claim 5, wherein the spring packs are mounted to allow the springs of the spring packs to produce an outwardly directed force on the shoe beams.

8. (Original) The releasable retarder of claim 2, wherein the operating member is supported near the centerline of the railway track section.

Claim 9 (Cancelled)

10. (Original) The releasable retarder of claim 5, wherein said operating mechanism includes a plurality of lever systems, and the common operating member is coupled to the spring packs through the lever systems.

11. (Original) The releasable retarder of claim 1, wherein said shoes are removably mounted on said shoe beams.

12. (Currently Amended) A releasable retarder for resisting movement of a railway car moving along first and second running rails of a railway track, said releasable retarder comprising:

first and second shoe beams supported adjacent to said running rails;

a plurality of pairs of shoes carried by said shoe beams in a parallel, spaced relation with first and second running rails;

a plurality of springs biasing the shoe beams toward the running rails, trapping wheels of a railway car entering the retarder between the shoes carried by the shoe beams and the running rails and applying a frictional force to the railway car wheels for stopping the railway car and retaining the railway car in the retarder; and

an a bidirectional operating mechanism operable in a release mode for moving the shoe beams ~~between~~ from a home position in which the shoes are positioned to engage the railway car wheels, and to a release position in which the ~~spring~~ frictional force is released, allowing the railway car to move freely through the retarder, said operating mechanism operable in a service mode for moving the shoe beams from the home position to a service position, allowing the insertion of shimming elements to compensate for wear on the shoes carried by the shoe beams, said operating mechanism including a plurality of rams and a common operating member which couples the rams to the ~~spring packs~~ springs, for causing the springs to be compressed, ~~drawing as~~ the shoe beams are moved inwardly away from the ~~running rails~~ home position to the release position by the operating mechanism; and

a lever system coupling the operating member to the shoe beams, the lever system providing a mechanical advantage for compressing the springs as the shoe beams are moved from the home position towards the release position.

13. (Original) The releasable retarder of claim 12, wherein said operating mechanism includes a plurality of

lever systems, and the common operating member is coupled to the spring packs through the lever systems.

14. (Currently Amended) The releasable retarder of claim 12, wherein the rams are bidirectional devices, ~~allowing the retarder to function in a service mode in which the operating mechanism moves the shoe beams to a service position, allowing the insertion of shims to compensate for wear on the shoes.~~

15. (Original) The releasable retarder of claim 12 wherein said shoes are removably mounted on said shoe beams.

16 (Currently Amended) A releasable retarder for resisting movement of a railway car moving along first and second running rails of a railway track, said releasable retarder comprising:

first and second shoe beams supported adjacent to said running rails;

a plurality of pairs of shoes carried by said shoe beams in parallel, spaced relation with said first and second running rails;

a bias structure biasing the shoe beams toward the running rails, trapping wheels of the railway car entering the retarder between the running rails and the shoes carried by the shoe beams and applying a frictional force to the railway car wheels for stopping the railway car, retaining the railway car in the retarder; and

~~an~~ a bidirectional operating mechanism operable in a release mode for moving the shoe beams ~~between~~ inwardly from a home position in which the shoes are positioned to engage the railway car wheels, ~~and~~ to a release position in

which the bias force is released, allowing the railway car to move freely through the retarder, and

at least one shimming element;

the operating mechanism operable in a service mode for moving the shoe beams outwardly from the home position
~~wherein the rams are bidirectional devices, allowing the retarder to function in a service mode in which the operating mechanism moves the shoe beams to a service position, allowing the insertion of shims~~ the shimming element to compensate for wear on the shoes carried by the shoe beams.

17. (New) The releasable retarder of claim 13, wherein each of said lever systems include at least one lever and at least one coupling member coupled to said lever, said member adapted to engage one of said spring packs as said shoe beams are moved from said home position toward said service position.

18. (New) The releasable retarder of claim 17, wherein said coupling member is coupled between said lever and one of said shoe rails and repositions said one spring pack as said one shoe rail is moved from said home position to said service position.